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SHELL SHOCK
A Play In One Act
by
Eugene S. O'Neill

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SHELL SHOCK ✓

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Characters

Jack Arnold, Major of Infantry, U.S.A.
Herbert Roylston, Lieutenant of Infantry, U.S.A.
Robert Wayne, Medical Corps, U.S.A.

Scene - A corner in the grill of the New York club of a large Eastern University. Six tables with chairs placed about them are set at regular intervals in two rows of three from left to right. On the left, three windows looking out on a side street. In the rear, four windows opening on an avenue. On the right, forward, the main entrance to the grill.

It is the middle of the afternoon of a hot day in September, 1918. Through the open windows, the white curtains of which hang motionless, unstirred by the faintest breeze, a sultry vapor of dust-clogged sunlight can be seen steaming over the hot asphalt. Here, in the grill, it is cool. The drowsy humming of an electric fan on the left wall lulls to inertness. A bored, middle-aged waiter stands leaning wearily against

the wall between the tables in the rear, gaping and staring listlessly out at the avenue. Every now and then he casts an indifferent glance at the only other occupant of the room, a young man of about thirty dressed in the uniform of an officer in the Medical Corps who is sitting at the middle table, front, sipping a glass of iced coffee and reading a newspaper. The officer is under medium height, slight and wiry, with a thin, pale face, light brown hair and mustache, and grey eyes peering keenly through tortoise-rimmed spectacles.

As the curtain rises there is a sound of footsteps from the entrance. The waiter half-straightens into an attitude of respectful attention. A moment later Herbert Royston enters. He is a brawny young fellow of twenty-seven or so, clad in the uniform of a first lieutenant of infantry. Blond and clean-shaven, his rather heavy, good-natured face noticeably bears the marks of a recent convalescence from serious illness. Lines of suffering about the lips contrast with his ever-ready, jovial grin; and his blue eyes of a healthy child seem shadowed by the remembrance of pain, witnessed and not by them to be forgotten.

Royston stands at the entrance and glances about the grill. The waiter starts forward with an inquiring "Yes, sir?". The medical officer is engrossed in some bit of news and does not look up. Royston walks forward to his table and glances at the other curiously. Then the paper is put down and the eyes of the two men meet. A look of perplexed recognition comes over both their faces.

Royston -(With a boyish grin) I know you. Wait a minute! (The other smiles) Ah! Now I've got it - Wayne, isn't it - Bobby Wayne? You used to room with Jack Arnold at college.

Wayne - That's right; and this is - Royston, isn't it? I met you here with Jack?

Royston - That's who. (The two men shake hands heartily, evidently greatly pleased at this chance meeting)

Wayne - I'm very glad to see you again. Sit down. Won't you have something to drink? (He beckens to the waiter)

Royston - Sure thing. That's what I came in for - that, and to try and find someone to talk to, and write a couple of letters. (To the waiter) Iced coffee, please. (The waiter goes out) Its a sure enough broiler in the streets. Whew! (He mops his face with his handkerchief - then continues apologetically) I guess I'm still a bit weak. You know I had rather a close shave, thanks to the poache.

Wayne -(Nodding; I can see by your face that you've been through the mill. What was it - scrapnel?)

Royston -(With a grin) A touch of that in both legs; and afterward machine gun her and here. (He touches the upper part of his chest) They nearly had me. (Showing emotion) If it hadn't been for Jack --

Wayne - (Interestedly) Eh? You don't mean Jack Arnold?

Royston - I sure do! He came out into No Mans Land and got me.

Wayne -(Quickly) When was this - after Chateau Thierry?

Royston - Yes.

Wayne -(Astonished) Then you were the one he brought back - that exploit --

Royston - I don't know about the one. I was a one, at any rate. (With enthusiasm) Jack's got a whole caboodle of such stunts to his credit. I wouldn't dare say that I --

Wayne -(Puzzled) But I heard - they didn't give the name - but I understood it was the body of a dead officer he risked his life to get.

Royston - (Laughing) I guess they did think I was a gone goose at the time; but I managed to pull through. You can't put a squirrel in the ground.(The waiter comes back bringing the iced coffee which he sets on the table. Royston takes a sip and sighs contentedly.)

Wayne -(When the waiter has resumed his post by the rear windows) Tell me about it, will you, Royston? The reports have been so meager, and I'm so damn interested in all Jack does. You see Jack and I have palmed together ever since we were knee-high.

Royston - Yes. He's told me.

Wayne - But he's such a rotten correspondent that, even when I was in France, I had to depend on the war correspondents and the official reports for any news about him. So it'd be a favor if you'd --

Royston -(Embarrassed) There isn't much to tell. We got caught in a bit of berrage half-way to the third Boesche trench - we'd captured the first two and should have stopped, but you get drunk with the joy of chasing them back and you don't stop to think.

Wayne - I can understand that!

Royston - Well, that was where I got mine - in both legs. I went down and couldn't get up. The boys had to go back to the trench we'd just captured. They didn't have time to do any picking up. I must have seemed dead anyway. I remember the Boesche counter-attacked and caught hell. Then the lights went out completely as far as I was concerned.

Wayne -(Eagerly) But you've heard how Jack's company got ~~at~~ out off

in that second trench, haven't you? How the Hun barrage cut all communication between them and the rest of the army? (Enthusiastically) Jack's company held out for three days and nights against all kinds of terrific shelling and counter attacks, without support or relief, until the rest of the division advanced again and caught up with them. Nearly every member of the company was either killed or wounded - but they stuck it out! (Enthusiastically) It was a wonderful example of what our boys can do ~~even~~ in a pinch!

Roylston - It sure was great stuff! I heard about that part of it afterward in hospital; but at the time it all happened I wasn't especially interested in what was going on around me.

Wayne - Then - when was it Jack came out to get you?

Roylston - Just after the division pushed up and they were relieved

Wayne - (Astonished) That third night!

Roylston - It was at night, I know.

Wayne - (Looking at him with wondering admiration) Then - you were lying in No Man's Land three days and nights - badly wounded?

Roylston - (Embarrassed) I must have been, I guess. I didn't notice time much. I was sort of out of my head with thirst and pain, or in a numb trance most of the time. You know how one gets. (Wayne nods) I'd see dark and light but --- I didn't think of anything at all - not even of death. (He pauses and then continues shamefacedly) Finally I came to in the dark. I heard someone screaming - damn horribly! I listened and discovered that I was doing it -- screaming at the top of my lungs! Honestly, I was ashamed to death of myself. I managed to get to my feet. I had a mad hunch to get back to our lines. Then a Bosche machine gun

commenced to rattle, and I felt a terrific thud in the chest - and the ground came up and hit me. The Boche artillery loosened up and a shower of star shells made it light as day. I saw a man come running through that hell straight for me. The air was fairly sizzling with bullets but he kept right on, and then when he came close I saw it was Jack. He shouted: Royston, and hauled me up on his shoulder. The pain of it knocked me into a faint. When I came to I was in hospital. (With a shy grin of relief) So that's all I know about it.

Wayne - You certainly had a frightful time of it, old man.

Royston - No worse than the rest of the boys. We all have to take our medicine sooner or later. But its lucky for me Jack saw me stand up that time.

Wayne - You think he saw you.

Royston - (Making a wry face) I hope so. I'd hate to think he heard me bawling out there. I guess they all thought me dead or they'd have been out looking for me before that." (He drinks the rest of his coffee) "Well, I've got to toddle upstairs and write ---"

Wayne - Wait a minute, will you, Royston? There's something I want to talk over with you. It's about Jack - and perhaps you can help me.

Royston - Certainly. (As the other hesitates) Something about Jack, you say?

Wayne - Yes. But first let me explain how I happen to be here at home. I'm not on leave, and I wasn't sent back from France on account of ill health, as you might think. At the base hospital over there I was assigned to treating victims of shell-shock. I'd made quite a study of the disease since it first became known and as a consequence was more

successful than most at treating it. So a few months ago when the sick commenced to be sent home in appreciable numbers, I was ordered back here to help on shock patients.

Royston - I see.

Wayne -(With a keen glance at the other - lowering his voice) And, this is strictly confidential, of course, it appears from a letter I recently received, as if Jack Arnold is likely to become one of my patients.

Royston -(Amazed) What! Not shell shock?

Wayne - Yes.

Royston - Good God! at there must be some mistake. Why Jack has the nerves of an ox!

Wayne - Did have. Don't forget he's been in there three years now without a let-up - when you come to count the two he was with the Canadians before he was transferred to ours. That's a long stretch.

Royston - But the last I remember of him he was A.K.

Wayne - It hits you all of a sudden usually; besides, it's by no means certain in Jack's case. The letter I spoke of was from a Doctor Thompson over there, one of the heads. He wrote that Jack had been sent to the base hospital with a leg wound, nothing serious in itself. But, knowing I was a friend of Jack's, Thompson wrote to tell me Jack had been invalided home, and for me to study him carefully when he arrived. His trouble seemed to be plain nervous break-down, Thompson said, but still there was something queer about the case he couldn't get hold of and he hadn't the time to devote to individuals. So he left it up to me.

Royston - Didn't he give you some hint as to just what he meant was the trouble with Jack?

Wayne - Only a postscript evidently scribbled in a hurry. He wrote: "Watch Arnold - cigarettes!" - with the word cigarettes deeply underlined

Royston -(ponderingly) "Cigarettes?"

Wayne - Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it, especially as Jack never smokes.

Royston -(quickly) Oh, he did over there - a great deal. As I remember him he had one stuck in his mouth all the time.

Wayne -(astonished) What. Why, when I knew him he wouldn't touch one on a bet. (The two men look at each other for a moment deeply puzzled) There's something queer about it, evidently - from that postscript.

Royston -(after a moment) Oh, I guess it's just that your Thompson is one of those anti-cigarette fiends.

Wayne -(frowning) Quite the contrary. He smokes incessantly himself. There must be something in it. Thompson is one of our keenest diagnosticians.

Royston -(confidently) No matter how sharp he is I'll bet he's all wrong about Jack. Why - hell - Jack's made of iron. I've seen him in the trenches and I know. If he'd been shot or gassed or - but shall I shock - Bosh! Jack'd laugh at that." (Lagerly) But when do you expect him to get here?

Wayne - Any day now.

Royston - Gad, I sure hope he arrives before I leave. I want to see him above all other people in the world - to thank him, if I can, for

my presence in our midst. (Impulsively) If you only knew how I feel about Jack! (Inconsequentially) You remember his senior year at college when he was All-American half - and his touchdown that won the Harvard game? (Wayne nods) I was just a Freshman then and you can imagine what a hero he was to me. (Wayne smiles) And then to go over there and find myself directly under his command - to become his friend! It meant a devil of a lot, I tell you!

Wayne - It must have.

Boylston - And then to cap the climax he saved my life when not one man in a million would have tried it - and no blame to them, either! It was rank suicide. The chances were a thousand to one against his coming out of it alive. (With a grin) When I get started on that subject I never stop, so I guess I better beat it to my letter writing. Be sure and let me know when Jack arrives, I sure want to see him.

Wayne - (As they both stand and shake hands) I'll be sure to.

Boylston - Thanks. Well, so long for the present.

Wayne - So long. (He sits down again. Boylston goes out. Wayne drums on the table with his fingers and stares before him, deep in his thoughts. After a moment steps are heard from the entrance, right, and Jack Arnold comes into the grill. He is a tall, broad-shouldered, and sinewy-built man of about thirty with black hair and mustache. The sun tan on his strong-features, handsome face has been faded to a sickly yellow by illness. Lines of nervous tension are deep about his mouth and nose, and his cheeks are hollow, the skin drawn taut over the cheek bones. His dark eyes have a strained expression of uncertain expectancy as if he were constantly holding himself in check while he waited for a mine to explode. His hands tremble a little. He has a queer mannerism of

continually raising the fore and middle fingers of his right hand to his lips as though he were smoking an invisible cigarette. He wears the uniform of a major of infantry.)

Arnold -(Immediately recognizes Wayne and calls out casually) Hello, Bobby. (He strides toward the table.)

Wayne -(Jumps to his feet, nearly upsetting the table) Jack! (His face glowing with pleasure as he pumps his friend's hand up and down) By all that's wonderful! When did you get in?

Arnold - This morning.

Wayne -(Pushing him into a chair, Sit down, you old scoundrel! I've been expecting to hear of your arrival every day. (Clapping him on the back affectionately) It's certainly a sight for sore eyes to see you alive and kicking again!

Arnold - Yes, I'm glad to be back for a bit. I was rather done up in a nervous way.

Wayne - So Doctor Thompson wrote me.

Arnold -(Betraying uneasiness) Oh, he wrote you, did he?

Wayne - Yes; said you were coming back.

Arnold -(Irritably) He's a fossilized old woman, your Thompson - fusses like a wet hen about imaginary symptoms.

Wayne - Yet he's one of the best in his line.

Arnold -(Dryly) Perhaps; but you'll not convince me of it. (He makes the peculiar motion of fingers to his lips) He got on my nerves

frightfully with his incessant examinations - pure rot, if you want my opinion.

Wayne -(With a keen professional glance at his friend's face - from this time he studies Arnold as a patient) But, honestly, you do look as if you'd been knocked out for a time.

Arnold -(Annoyed) No; fit as a fiddle. (Vaguely) It's only the silence. (he again makes the motion to his lips)

Wayne -(Mystified) Silence?

Arnold -(not appearing to notice this question - with sudden eagerness) Have you a cigarette, Bobby?

Wayne -(Takes out his case and offers it to Arnold) You're smoking now?

Arnold - Naturally. (He lights the cigarette and, drawing in a deep inhale, exhales it with a sigh of relief.)

Wayne - Now, naturally? You didn't use to, you know - every a puff.

Arnold - Had to over there. (With sudden remembrance) I was forgetting - it's such a damn long while since I've seen you, 'obby.

Wayne - Three years.

Arnold -(Vaguely) A lot of things can happen in that time, what? (With a detached air, as if he were unconscious of what he is doing, he puts out the cigarette from which he has hardly taken more than a few puffs, and carefully puts the butt into a pocket of his uniform.)

Wayne -(watching him curiously) That ---. (He suddenly thinks ~~it's~~ better of his question and stops.)

Arnold -(Sharply) Eh?

Wayne - Oh, nothing. (As Jack stares at him) How's the wound in your leg?

Arnold - All O.K. Only a scratch. (He again puts his fingers to his lips nervously - then his eyes fall on the cigarette case on the table) I'll graft another of your fags,obby,if I may.

Wayne - Help yourself.

Arnold -(Brighting up) I went straight to your house from the dock. I saw your mother. She told me I'd probably find you here. (With a display of affection) It's good to see you again,obby,damn good! Like a tonic, by Jove! I feel bucked up already.

Wayne -(with a smile) I'm glad of that,Jack.

Arnold -(Reminiscently) What times we used to have together,eh?

Wayne - Bully!

Arnold - Those week-ends in the city when you came on from Baltimore - when you were a grinding medical student and I was a - (Corny) scribbler!

Wayne - Have you managed to get any writing done over there?

Arnold -(With a frown) No. What's the use? It's not a thing one can write about,is it?(There is a pause. Arnold mechanically puts out his cigarette and is just placing it in his pocket when he looks up and catches his friend's eye probing into his strange action. He immediately becomes conscious of what he is doing and shame-facedly hurls his cigarette on the floor and stamps on it.) Damn it all!(Irritably) What are you staring at,Bobby?

Wayne -(Flushing) Nothing - er --

Arnold - You must think me a thundering ass when you catch me in a childish act like that - just like a kid on the streets "sniping butts". I can't seem to break myself of the devilish habit - must have contracted it in the front line trenches - saving up butts for an emergency when I'd be without a smoke. And now I do mechanically - (hesitates - then moodily in a low voice) whenever the silence comes over me.

Wayne -(Seeing his friend's embarrassment - soothingly) It's natural enough.

Arnold -(As if he were talking to himself) There's something back of it I can't get at - something that drives me to do it. (He shakes his head as if banishing some painful thought, and producing an unopened box of cigarettes from each of his pockets, turns to Wayne with a forced laugh) Here I've got a full box in each pocket and yet I'll bet I've been grafting yours as though there wasn't one for sale in the whole world. It's a disgusting obsession. I've got to break myself of it or people will think I've a screw loose somewhere. It's up to you, Bobby, to call me down every time you catch me. That'll do the trick. (Forgetful of the full boxes on the table he calls to the waiter roughly) Hey, waiter!

The Waiter -(Starting out of his dose) Yes, sir?

Arnold - A box of cigarettes.

The Waiter - What kind would you like, sir?

Arnold -(Vaguely) Any kind.

Wayne - But you've all these unopened on the table, Jack.

Arnold -(Flushing - awkwardly) Yes - so I have - I was forgetting.

(To the waiter) Never mind about them now. (There is a pause during which Arnold presses his hands to his forehead as if he were trying to focus his thoughts. Finally he mutters in a low voice) It's the silence. That does it.

Wayne -(Staring at him keenly) That's the third time you've mentioned the silence, Jack. What do you mean, exactly? What silence?

Arnold -(After a pause) Just that - the silence. It hits you when you're sent back home after you've been in the lines for a long time - say a year or more without a holiday. (He laughs mockingly) A holiday! A rest period! Rest! Good God! (He turns to Wayne excitedly) Understand that I'm only speaking from my own experience and my feelings may have no general significance. But I believe they have. I've seen them verified in the faces of those men who come back to the trenches after a leave at home - their expression of genuine happiness at being back - why, man, they look relieved, freed from slavery! (He pauses for a moment, reflecting - then continues intensely) You've been hearing the rumble and crash of the big gas guns, the rat-a-pat rivetting of the machine-guns the crack of rifles, the whine of bullets, the roar of bursting shells. Everything whirls in a constant feverish movement around you; the earth trembles and quakes beneath your feet; even the darkness is only an intermittent phenomena snatching greedily at the earth between the wane of one star shell and the bursting brilliance of the next; even the night is goaded into insomnia by the everlasting fireworks. Nothing is fixed or certain. The next moment of your life never attains to the stability of even a probable occurrence. It hits you with the speed of a bullet, passes through you, is gone. (He pauses) And then you come out into the old peaceful world you once knew - for a rest - and it seems as if you hurried in the tomb of a pyramid erected before the stars were born.

Time has died of old age; and the silence, like the old Chinese water torture, drips leadenly drop by drop - on your brain.- and then you think - you have to think - about the things you ought to forget -

Wayne -(In a brisk voice - trying to rouse his friend) You'll get used to the quiet after a bit. You're letting your imagination run away with you. (Arnold looks at him with a curious, haggard smile) Do you know - it's a curious coincidence - I was just talking about you with a friend of yours before you came in. Speak of the devil, you know. Guess who it was?

Arnold -(Indifferently) I don't know. Who?

Wayne - Royston. It's funny you didn't run into him.

Arnold -(Showing no interest - as if he hadn't heard the name) I saw someone in uniform going up the stairs - didn't get a look at his face. Who did you say it was?

Wayne -(Laying emphasis on the name) Royston - Herb Royston -the man you dragged out of No Man's Land after Chateau Thierry when you won your load of medals, you chump!

Arnold -(Stunned) You don't mean - Herb?

Wayne - That's exactly who I do mean.

Arnold -(Pale and excited) Here - in this club - Herb? But that's impossible. Herb was dead, I tell you.

Wayne - You may think so; but you'll be doubly glad to hear he's very much alive, and he wants to see you and thank you for ---

Arnold -(Covering his face with his hands) Oh God!

Wayne -(Alarmed) Jack! What's the trouble?

Arnold -(Controlling himself with an effort) Nothing - only it brings it all back. (His fingers flutter to his mouth. He murmurs hoarsely) Got a cigarette, Bobby?

Wayne - There - on the table.

Arnold - Thanks. (He does not touch his own boxes but picks a cigarette from his friend's case and lights it. He takes a deep inhale and commences to talk volubly in a forced tone as if he were trying to cover up his apparent indifference in the matter of Hojston) I'm damn glad to hear about Herb. He's alive - really alive! It seems incredible. He was swimming in his own blood. I carried him over my shoulder. I was soaked with it. Ugh! (He shudders at the recollection but talks rapidly again, trying to drown his memories) I'll be damn glad to see him again - damn glad. Herb's a corking chap - one of the best. He and I were great chums over there. (He puts his cigarette out and sticks it hastily in his pocket. Wayne sees this and seems about to speak but thinks better of it. Arnold goes on in an agitated tone) Yes, Herb's one fine chap. That was an awful mess - the worst ever - that Chateau Thierry affair. I'll have to tell you about it. We ran out of cigarettes you know - not a damn one in the whole company - not a smoke of any description. It was hell. Speaking of smokes - you've another fag, haven't you, Bobby?

Wayne -(quietly) On the table, Jack.

Arnold - Thanks. (He again takes one from Wayne's case and puffs nervously) "You can't realize what a smoke comes to mean to you in a first line trench. You'd have to have been there, Bobby. You wondered at my smoking now when I never had in the old days. I didn't at first -

then I had to - had to, I tell you! You know - the stench and the lice and the rest of it. A smoke takes your mind off them, somehow.

Wayne -(Soothingly) I know it's a good thing.

Arnold -(Complainingly) And that time in that Chateau Thierry trench ^h there was nothing. The Bosche ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{barrage} cut us off completely from the rest of the army. - not a smoke in the whole company! No chance of getting one! We only had emergency field rations and when they gave out some of the loys - toward the end - those who were still unwounded - were wild with hunger and thirst. I can remember Billy Starrett - a corporal - he went west with a bullet through his heart later on, poor fellow - singing some idiotic nonsense about beef steak pie over and over again - till it drove you nearly mad to listen to him. He must have been clean out of his head. But I didn't feel hunger or thirst at all. All I wanted was a smoke - and not a one!" (He puffs furiously at his cigarette)

Wayne - I've read about your famous three days, Jack. It was a glorious thing but I can well imagine how terrible it was also.

Arnold - (Excitedly) Terrible? No word for it! Man alive, you couldn't know! We'd crouch down in the mud with the trench rats squeaking and scampering with fright over our feet - nipping at your legs - while we waited for the next counter attack, wondering if the Bosche would get through the next time, gritting our teeth to stick it out. Their artillery played hell with us. The world seemed flying to bits. The concussions of the bursting shells - all about us - would jarr your heart right back against your spine. It rained shell splinters. Men kept falling, writhing and groaning in the muck - one's friends! - and nothing to do. A little Italian private - Tony - he used to sing for us in camp - don't know his second name I - used to be a bootblack here

at home - was standing near me. A shell fragment came down on his skull - his brains spattered all over - (Shuddering) - over my face. And all that time not a cigarette - not a damned smoke of any kind - to take your mind off - all that!

Wayne - (Worried by Arnold's rapidly increasing excitement) You ought to try and forget those unavoidable horrors, Jack. War has to be what it is - until we make an end to it forever.

Arnold - (Having this remark aside) You've got to know about it, all you others - then you'll send us the things we need, smokes and the rest. (He throws his cigarette away and lights another) And at nights it was frightful, expecting a surprise attack every minute - watching - straining your eyes! We had to pile the dead up against the rear wall of the trench; and when you'd stumble in the dark you'd put your hand out and touch a - a face, or a leg - or - something sticky with blood. Not a wink of sleep you couldn't! Even when the guns let up for a moment there were the screams of the wounded out in No Mans Land. They'd keep the dead awake - lying out there dying by bits. And you couldn't go out to get them in that fire. It was suicide. I told the men that. They wanted to go out and get their friends, and I couldn't give permission. We needed every man. It was suicide. I told them so. They wept and cursed. It was my duty. They would have been killed - uselessly.

Wayne - But you went out yourself - for Royston.

Arnold - (Vaguely - shaking his head) No; Royston was dead. I saw him fall flat on his face. Then after that for three days I didn't see or hear him - so he must have been dead. (He hurries on volubly as if this thought of Royston disturbed him) I thought I'd go mad. No place for the wounded to be cared for - groans and shrieks on all sides! And

not a thing to smoke!! You had to think - think about it! And the stench of the bodies rotting in the sun between the Bosche trench and ours! God And not a single cigarette,do you understand? Not one! You'd feel sick clear down to the soles of your feet. You finally came to believe you were putrefying yourself - alive! - and the living men around you - they too - rotten!

Wayne -(Revolted) For heavens sake,Jack, cut it out!

Arnold - . cigarette would have been heaven - to fill your lungs with clean smoke - to cleanse the stench out of your nostrils! But no! Not the tiniest butt! Not a damn thing! Its unbelievable! (Crowing more and more excited) And when the relief came - our boys - and I was weeping with the joy of it - and I prayed to them - yes,actually prayed - Give me a cigarette,for God's sake! Not a one,Bobby,do you hear? Not a blessed one of them had any. There'd been a delay,a mistake,something. Someone had come up with the supplies. I was wild. I cursed them. I suddenly remembered Royston. He'd given me one just before we charged. He had a whole case full I remembered,and I knew the spot where he went down - the exact spot. After that - I forget. It's all a blank. I must have gone over the top and brought him back. (His voice sinks to a dull whisper) He notices the half-smoked cigarette in his hand and throws it away with a gesture of loathing)

Wayne -(Gazing at him with horrified eyes) Then that was why - you saved Royston - for a cigarette - God! (As Arnold hides his face in his hands with a half-sob Wayne hastens to add compassionately) No,it could have been that. Your mind is sick,old pal,do you know it? Very sick. Come with me,Jack. Let's get out of here. (He gets to his feet putting his hand on his friend's shoulder)

Arnold -(Getting to his feet - in agonised tones) What have I been

saying? I've never talked about it before - but that's the thought that's been eating into my brain, Bobby - what you just said. That's why I'm going mad - thinking about it - day and night! (With frenzied protest) It couldn't have been that! I must have gone out for him - for Herb! I must have suddenly realized that he was out there - still alive - suffering! (Breaking down) But how could I have known that? I thought he was dead. How? I can't remember.

Wayne -(Quickly) You saw him when he stood up, of course - when he tried to get back to our lines.

Arnold -(Hopelessly - with a groan) No - no - I saw noone - nothing

Wayne -(Forcibly) Then you heard him screaming out there - screaming with pain in his delirium. Think!

Arnold -(His eyes widening) Screaming? Yes - there was screaming - driving you mad - (His face contracts convulsively. He beats his head with his hands, his eyes shut in his effort to visualize the scene) Yes - and then - God! - one voice - when all the others were silent for a second - like this -(he throws his head back and screams as if in horrible pain)

Wayne -(As the waiter shrinks back against a window terrified) Jack! Stop!

Arnold - (In a frenzy of joy) I remember it all now. It was his voice - Herb's - screaming - just at the moment we were relieved! Then I know he was out there alive. I couldn't bear it! That's why I went over - to save him - Herb! - not the damned cigarettes! (His face lights up and he grabs Wayne's hand and pumps it up and down) That's why I've been sick - queer - crazy - off my nut, lobby! They've all been telling

what a hero I was - and I thought I'd done it all for - I couldn't remember why I'd gone for him - except the cigarettes - and they gave me medals for bravery - and all the time I've been going mad - slowly - inside - thinking I was a damned cur! But now I know, Bobby. I remember every bit that happened. I heard him scream - and I did go over to save Herb, Bobby! Thank God! (He sinks down weak into a chair, weak but radiant)

Wayne -(calmly) Why sure you did. It's only a touch of shock got the other fool notion into your head. (With a grin) And now I can dismiss your case. You're cured already. I'm some doctor, eh? (While he is speaking Royston appears in the doorway. When he sees Jack he gives a shout of delight and rushes over throwing his arms around Arnold in a bear hug)

Royston -(Shaking him affectionately) Hello, Jack! (He holds him at arm's length - with embarrassment) Here you are at last - I've wanted to see you - to try and tell - to try and thank - damn it! (Max fumbles in his pocket and pulls out his cigarette case which he offers to Jack) It's hard to speak about such things - but you know - have a cigarette.

Arnold - Not on your life! Never another! A pipe for mine for the rest of my life! (He beckons wildly to the waiter) Hey, waiter! Bring on a gallon of wine! Camouflage it in a teapot, if you have to, and pour it through a strainer. Here's where we celebrate! (The astonished waiter stands gaping at him in petrified wonder as Jack grabs Herb's hand and shakes it up and down) How are you, Herb, you old son of a gun?

The Curtain Falls.

Eugene O'Neill

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or a small note, located in the center of the page.



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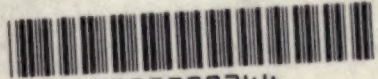
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